



# Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### Federal Government Announces Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant Finalists

**Los Angeles** – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced the list of finalists for the Choice Neighborhoods Implementation (CNI) Grant. The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) along with its Master Developer partner submitted a comprehensive and detailed plan to redevelop the Jordan Downs public housing community in Watts. Six cities are on the shortlist to compete for the grant out of 44 applicants and Los Angeles was not one of the finalists.

"While this is disappointing, I will direct HACLA to reapply. We remain committed to supporting the residents and revitalizing Jordan Downs," said Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti.

The Jordan Downs Plan allows for the development of up to 1,400 new homes, much needed neighborhood-serving retail, parks and a community center. The Community-Based Master Plan emphasizes the expansion of open spaces and natural resources, the reduction of energy and water use, connection to the broader community and a pedestrian-oriented transit design. This new vision promises to serve as a catalyst for the economic and social enhancement of the greater neighborhood of Watts.

"We are surprised and disappointed with the outcome of the competition. This grant of up to \$30 million was a critical component of the city's unprecedented effort to bring sustainable change to the Watts community," said Douglas Guthrie, President and CEO of HACLA. "Without this significant resource, the agency and the developers will need to re-evaluate the residential financing component of the project."

"I was very disappointed to learn that the Jordan Downs development project in Watts, CA did not receive the Choice Neighborhood Initiative (CNI) grant by HUD," said Congresswoman Janice Hahn. "This is an incredible let down for the families in Watts who are living in poverty stricken areas and desperately need an opportunity for a better quality of life. The Jordan Downs project is that life-changing opportunity for these families. The importance of this project to the community cannot be overstated."

The work to redevelop Jordan Downs began in 2008 with nearly one-hundred community meetings. Partnerships were formed to implement a robust Human Capital Plan to help residents increase quality of life well-before any physical redevelopment. An experienced Master Developer team, The Michaels Organization and BRIDGE Housing Corporation, with a proven track record of successful redevelopment projects was brought on board in 2012 to continue the work.



“We strongly feel that Los Angeles’ application addressed CNI’s three core goals,” explained Whitney Weller, Senior Vice President at The Michaels Organization. “The plan focused on transforming distressed Housing into an energy efficient, mixed-income community; partnerships were formed to ensure that residents’ health, safety, employment, mobility and education were targeted as part of the Human Capital Plan. We also worked to ensure that families would have access to quality services among other significant improvements.”

“Despite our disappointment, the development team remains committed to helping the residents realize the dream of living in a safer, sustainable community,” said Kim McKay, Executive Vice President of BRIDGE Housing. “The Choice Neighborhoods grant would have been a welcome resource, but we will continue to seek the funding needed to move this forward. Significant public and private investments have already been committed to transform and revitalize the Jordan Downs and Watts.”

The redevelopment project includes a plan of annexation and environmental clean-up of acquired adjacent land, extension of Century Blvd as well as the redevelopment of over 100,000 sq. ft. of commercial/retail space. The team is committed to this work and plan to move forward with some of the components already in progress.

“There needs to be a strong federal support as this City comes up with a plan to deal with the aging public housing infrastructure,” said Councilman Joe Buscaino. “The community of Jordan Downs worked diligently with HACLA and the Master Developer to establish a plan for what is to be an unprecedented effort to bring economic opportunities to Watts. I am disappointed that this project did not receive the support it deserves. We remain hopeful that Los Angeles will be able to successfully compete in the next application round for CNI funding.”

The Redevelopment of Aliso Village in 1998 was the last time the City of Los Angeles received federal funding for full revitalization of public housing. There are no cities in the Western region of the country in this year’s CNI short list.

The following applicants are the finalists: Housing Authority of the City of Atlanta, Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, Housing Authority of the City of Norwalk/Norwalk Redevelopment Agency, City of Philadelphia, Office of Housing and Community Development/Philadelphia Housing Authority, Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh/City of Pittsburgh, Community Action Project of Tulsa County, Inc.

### **ABOUT CNI**

HUD’s Choice Neighborhoods Initiative promotes a comprehensive approach to transforming distressed areas of concentrated poverty into viable and sustainable mixed-income neighborhoods. Building on the successes of HUD’s HOPE VI Program, Choice Neighborhoods links housing improvements with necessary services for the people who live there – including schools, public transit and employment opportunities.

